



PERMANENT MISSION OF
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TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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TO THE 45TH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

ON WEDNESDAY, 26 SEPTEMBER 1990

Uniting for collective security and peaceful change

Mr President,

I should first of all like to extend to you my congratulations on your election as president of this Assembly. With your wisdom and experience in the chair, this assembly is undoubtedly in good hands. You can count on the constructive cooperation of the Netherlands delegation. Secondly, I extend a warm welcome to Liechtenstein, a new member of this family of nations.

Earlier this week my Italian counterpart, Mr De Michelis, presented the common position of the twelve member states of the European Community on a wide range of international issues. This allows me to concentrate on a few subjects which have my country's special attention.

Mr President,

1990 has so far been a year of spectacular success in international politics, but has also witnessed a serious setback.

The Cold War, a costly and sometimes frightening confrontation between East and West, is over. The democratization of the Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries has freed Europe from an old antagonism and has paved the way for increasing cooperation in arms control, trade, cultural exchanges, human rights and environmental protection.

The forthcoming unification of Germany symbolizes this process of peaceful change, the healing of a once bitterly divided Europe. We rejoice with our German friends and neighbours that the unity which they have long sought will finally become a fact on 3rd October.

The improved climate between East and West will also positively influence multilateral cooperation, as is proven by the United Nations' handling of the present crisis in the Gulf. Its immediate cause constitutes itself a regrettable regress in international relations. It is a saddening paradox that, while in one part of the world new policies of a group of countries have allowed for improved relations and a process of substantial arms reductions, at the same time in another part of the world military force is being used again to settle political differences. Whatever disputes Iraq may have had with Kuwait, nothing can justify its naked aggression against this sovereign member-state of the United Nations.

The very core of the UN charter is at stake: the maintenance of peace and the prevention of aggression. It is heartening to observe that the United Nations is at last fulfilling its historic mission. Consensus between the great powers has been instrumental in this. Fortunately it is now more widely realized that greater power brings greater responsibility.

We therefore welcome the action which the United Nations Security Council has taken in response to Iraq's aggression, at the heart of which lies its call for an immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait. The Kingdom of the Netherlands fully supports the implementation of the Council's resolutions. Dutch naval and air forces have been made available to help ensure compliance with the embargo against Iraq and to contribute to security in the Gulf.

We strongly condemn the actions taken by Iraq against foreign nationals in Kuwait and Iraq and against diplomatic missions in Kuwait. We hold the government of Iraq responsible under international law for its manipulation of innocent civilians for purposes of international blackmail.

Mr President,

It is our sincere hope that this conflict be resolved peacefully. But we should always remember that it is Iraq that broke the peace in the first place. Its shameless annexation of Kuwait could not be left unanswered. Sometimes it is unavoidable to balance might with might, as is being underscored by more than 25 UN members that have deployed forces in the region. Far from harbouring aggressive thoughts of their own, they seek to uphold world order. The alternative is chaos and a free for all from which everyone, not just the small and weak, will suffer. The sad story of the League of Nations has taught the world that we must stand firm and united in the face of aggression.

Just as in Europe, we would prefer to see regional solutions to the regional problems in the Middle East. In principle we therefore understand the call for an Arab solution to this conflict. We are dealing here, however, with the aggression of an Arab state against another Arab state. And it is at the request of Arab states, which feel threatened by Iraq, that countries from outside the region have come to their aid. Moreover, international aggression and violent conquest transcend the confines of the region, because they strike at the heart of the UN Charter. Finally, legitimate interest in the stability of this part of the world is certainly not limited to the region itself. It should therefore be clear that an Arab solution cannot be a substitute for Security Council resolutions, but could only take shape subject to Iraq's full compliance with them.

Meanwhile, an embargo that is strictly abided by and properly enforced offers the best, if not the last, hope for a peaceful settlement of this conflict. In this context we welcome the adoption of Security Council Resolution 670 containing measures that further tighten the embargo. The Iraqi aggression and the implementation of the embargo obviously imply disproportionate damage, as well as great human suffering for a number of states. The Netherlands together with its partners in the European Community is committed to extend assistance to these countries to enable them to fulfil their obligations under the Security Council resolutions.

Mr President,

Effective international cooperation within the framework of the United Nations has taken on a new dimension. By applying the instruments provided for in Chapter VII of the UN Charter, the world shows its willingness to unite for collective security. In recent years we have seen successful UN peace-keeping efforts, permitted by propitious international political conditions. If Iraq complies with the Security Council's resolutions and withdraws from Kuwait, the situation thereafter could very well require deployment of a UN peace-keeping force. If, however, Iraq continues to refuse to comply with them and persists in its illegal occupation of Kuwait, additional action, consistent with the UN Charter, will be called for to enforce the restoration of peace. Clearly, if that situation should arise - and we hope it will not - we look to the UN as the instrument for enforcement. Our fervent hope to reach a peaceful solution should not prevent us from being prepared for such a contingency.

Our objectives are clear, but we do not know how, in the end, they will be achieved. What we do know is that this crisis is a test for the political resolve of the international community and the UN Organization. Chapter VII, considered at the time of drafting as a great innovation, has never been applied so comprehensively. This crisis is an important demonstration of the possibilities of multilateral action to uphold vital principles of a just world order.

Mr President,

The Netherlands remains deeply concerned by the endemic instability of the Middle East. The Arab-Israeli conflict, the Palestinian problem and the situation in Lebanon are still unresolved. Any link between the solution of these problems and Iraqi aggression should, however, be firmly

rejected, as this would only give the appearance of justice to an unjust cause, and thereby frustrate the solution of the Gulf crisis.

Why is the Middle East such a powder keg, such a warehouse packed full of arms, ready to explode at any time? Why is there no development towards stability and peaceful change, comparable to the one we are witnessing in other parts of the world? It seems to us that a crucial political precondition is missing as long as there are parties that do not accept reality as it is, but constantly try to avoid the inevitable. I refer to the contempt for existing borders, to the negation of existing states and to the disregard for legitimate political aspirations. It is hard to believe that peace will come to the Middle East as long as Israel feels insecure because it is not accepted by its Arab neighbours. Equally, there will be no peace for Israel as long as it does not permit Palestinian self-determination in the occupied territories.

We believe that a declared state of non-belligerency between the countries of the region is essential for the revival of the peace process. We therefore call upon the Arab states formally to end the state of war with Israel and normalize relations with that country in the context of the peace process. Equally, we call upon Israel to comply with resolutions 242, 338 and 425 within the framework of a comprehensive peace agreement.

Furthermore, dialogue between Israel and the Palestinians is indispensable. Even if one has to admit that the opportunities which presented themselves during the past years have been missed and that the prospects for peace have been undermined by the position the PLO has adopted in the Gulf crisis, we nevertheless remain convinced that there is no other way ahead for Israel and the Palestinians than to demonstrate mutual recognition of fundamental rights and legitimate aspirations. Following the solution of the Gulf crisis, a renewed and determined effort by the international community is needed to induce the parties concerned to accept these prerequisites and to cross the threshold on the arduous road to a lasting peace.

With the lessons of the past in mind, notably in Europe, it seems that more democracy, more respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms, in combination with more arms control instead of arms build-up, are vital ingredients to be more emphatically inserted into the Middle East peace process if durable stability is to be attained.

Mr President,

While the positive trend in both nuclear and conventional arms control between East and West is very encouraging, such progress is distinctly lacking in other parts of the world, as the Gulf crisis shows. The Middle East especially is the scene of a rapid arms build-up. Weapons of every description - conventional, chemical, biological - are concentrated there on a huge scale whereas nuclear weapons seem to be eminent. Various means for delivery of such weapons are available in the region including missiles, some of them with a considerable reach.

Existing instruments must be fully applied to reverse this arms race, both worldwide and in the region. As for the danger of nuclear arms proliferation, there is a vital need to strengthen the Non Proliferation Treaty. All states in the region should become party to the Treaty. The Treaty's safeguard-system should be utilized in full, so as to include special inspections.

In the same vein, the Biological Weapons Treaty must become a more effective barrier against proliferation. It should be reinforced by area-wide accession and full ratification, further confidence-building measures and, ultimately, a credible verification regime. We will be putting forward proposals to this end at the next year's Review Conference.

The Gulf crisis can only strengthen the urgency of a global ban on chemical weapons. After twenty years of negotiations an effectively verifiable treaty with universal participation is long overdue. 1992 should really be our deadline. The Netherlands fully supports the Australian and

French proposal to hold a ministerial conference early next year to provide the necessary political impetus. I would remind delegates that the Netherlands has offered to host the CW Treaty Organization.

In the meantime, measures to stop further proliferation are urgently required. This applies to biological weapons and chemical weapons capable material as well as missiles and their technology. The Netherlands recently joined the Missile Technology Control Regime.

Mr. President,

An arms build-up is mainly a result, not a cause of tension, as the Cold War has taught us. As a consequence, we soon expect to sign a comprehensive treaty on the substantial reduction of conventional forces in Europe. In other regions of the world these political preconditions are not yet fulfilled, so it may be hard for countries to feel secure enough to restrict themselves in this respect. That is why it is so important that the ground rules for stability in the Middle East, which I referred to before, find acceptance and implementation. These should pave the way for more comprehensive security arrangements in which confidence-building measures and conventional arms control have a prominent place. Such arrangements will have consequences for the proliferation of weapons in the region. There will, however, always be a dilemma between legitimate security needs and the objective to avoid an arms race. In this context we will also have to look at ways and means to restrain arms exports, a subject which has now been broached upon for the first time in the UN.

Mr President,

We should feel encouraged by the progress made in other parts of the world. The combination of greatly improved East-West relations and a better functioning of the United Nations has had a wholesome effect on the quest for solutions to regional conflicts. In a number of cases this has inspired the local or regional parties to stop feuding and start looking for a fair and lasting compromise. The prospects for resolving the conflicts in Cambodia and South Africa, in particular, give rise to some optimism.

The comprehensive peace plan, which the Five have developed for Cambodia, contains a solid framework for the four warring factions to settle their differences and free their sorrowing country from the scourge of war and repression. The recent acceptance of the plan by the Cambodian parties, and their further agreement as to the details of the arrangement, should allow the country to make a safe transition to a democratic political system, with its sovereignty restored. The Cambodians must finally be free from the killing fields and from foreign interventions. We welcome the decision that Cambodia will be represented in the UN and elsewhere by the newly founded Supreme National Council. In case the Netherlands should be called upon to contribute to UN efforts to implement the peace-plan, such a request will meet our positive consideration.

South Africa, notwithstanding our deep concern over recent violence, offers a ray of hope. Here we find two courageous leaders, who have decided to bury the hatchet and endeavour to build a common future. The road ahead is full of obstacles. Forty years of Apartheid, whose pillars still stand basically upright are to be dismantled. These leaders have to tear down the walls of distrust and bring the various groups in South Africa into the constitutional dialogue. They have to write a new language, one of conciliation and mutual respect, in a country which is used to the language of hatred and the practice of violence. They have to open up perspectives for peaceful change in a society split apart by deep divisions between the haves and the have-nots. In other words, their task is of herculean proportions. And yet, there is reason for hope as both parties combine good will with good sense. After years of vigorous support of the anti-Apartheid struggle, the international community is now under an obligation to support the actual forces of change in South Africa. We feel that a policy of encouraging peaceful transition

to a democratic South Africa, in which all citizens enjoy equal rights, is justified. Therefore, tangible progress on the road towards a complete dismantling of Apartheid should go hand in hand with a corresponding relaxation of economic pressure on South Africa.

Mr President,

In Korea a start has been made to unfreeze the situation between North and South. While waiting for a further improvement of the relations between North and South Korea, we call for an adequate representation of the Korean people here in the UN.

Mr President,

Popular demand for democracy and the craving for human rights are growing stronger year after year. The human rights debate should not be permeated by a North-South divide. From Latin America to East Asia and from Eastern Europe to Africa people cry out for freedom, underlining time and again that human rights are truly universal values.

As we welcome the end to the Cold War, we also welcome a new perspective for the United Nations in the field of human rights. The UN's human rights standards have always provided clear and uncompromising criteria by which the conduct and achievements of governments could be measured. Now a sustained effort can be made to strengthen the supervisory machinery which is so important if respect for human rights is to be improved. In the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) mechanisms have been established which, more so than the existing UN body of norms, provide states with specific detailed procedures to hold each other accountable for violations of human rights. The same may be true for the new norms which have been developed in the CSCE for compliance with the requisites of free elections and the rule of law. Here, as elsewhere, regional and UN systems should reinforce each other.

Mr President,

No political order will last very long, if it does not permit change. In fact, the UN's concept of world order has always been a combination of collective security and peaceful change. Concentrating on restoring the peace, in the Gulf or elsewhere, however necessary and justified, is not enough. We must at the same time continue to put our energy into combating poverty, disease, illiteracy, drugs and terrorism, into promoting equitable economic development both domestically and internationally.

The recent 18th Special Session of this Assembly on International Economic Cooperation has put the world back on the right track in its dialogue on development problems, after long years of fruitless polarization. The Assembly's Declaration represents a fitting start for the formulation and implementation of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth Development Decade.

The Gulf crisis now seriously clouds the economic perspectives. Rising energy prices will severely impair development, particularly in Third World countries. Growth figures, debt-service ratios and adjustment programmes will have to be adjusted to more pessimistic indicators. There is reason for concern about the possible implications for the multilateral trade negotiations in the Uruguay Round. It is up to all of us to find a means of safeguarding the developing countries and especially the Least Developed Countries from severe setbacks in their economic and social progress. The Netherlands have recently taken the initiative to propose a collective cancellation of official bilateral debt to severely indebted poorest countries which implement sound economic policies.

Mr President,

Just as it is difficult to imagine safeguarding international peace without at the same time striving to promote social peace, it is equally difficult to imagine that either can survive in the long run without an ecological balance - in short, green peace. Life on earth for future generations could very well be endangered if man does not make peace with nature. And if not peace, then at least a cease-fire.

The threats are real enough: warming of the atmosphere, depletion of the ozone layer, acid rain, expanding deserts and reckless deforestation - to pick just a few from a growing list. It is indeed most urgent that we act, if only to stop further deterioration. We simply cannot afford the luxury of waiting for irrefutable scientific proof as to what precisely causes the different problems confronting us. We should not give ourselves the benefit of the doubt.

It is crucial now to move towards the early conclusion of a world climate convention which should put an effective stop to such related phenomena as the warming of the atmosphere, the depletion of the ozone layer and deforestation. We are happy to observe that the recent London Conference reached agreement on the total banning of CFC's by the year 2000.

Our endeavours to protect the atmosphere, and indeed the environment as a whole, can only be successful with the full participation of the developing countries. The industrialized countries have an obligation to help these already overburdened nations, among others, by providing facilitating funds. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, to be held in 1992, should set the seal on world-wide agreements on concrete measures for the protection of the environment and the restoration of the damage already inflicted, while taking account of the special position of the developing countries. The Netherlands continues to play an active role in its preparation. In this context I should like to mention a high level meeting on human settlements and sustainable development in November which will be hosted by the Netherlands.

Both the UN Conference on Environment and Development and the negotiations on new conventions, such as a World Climate Convention, serve as an opportunity to vest the UN with new crisis management and enforcement powers ensuring compliance with environmental standards. We should seize these opportunities in an adequate manner. After all, conditions of life on earth, and therewith the world's security, are at stake.

Mr President,

The Gulf crisis has once again made the world aware of the great value of a properly functioning United Nations. We sincerely hope that, after long years of stagnation, the UN will be able to enhance its role in the enforcement of collective security and the promotion of peaceful change. The UN should seize upon the present opportunity to resume the work on the reform and the streamlining of its organization, which have begun in the last few years.

The Netherlands has traditionally been an ardent supporter of the United Nations. We will do our share of the work involved in strengthening the world organization and international law in all its dimensions, including promotion of a greater recourse to the International Court of Justice, as recommended by the Secretary-General in his report on the work of the organization.

"With all its imperfections the United Nations organization offers the peace-loving nations of the world now a fully workable mechanism which will give them peace, if they want peace. To be sure, no piece of social machinery, however well constructed, can be effective unless there is, back of it, a will and determination to make it work."

Mr President,

These words of one of the fathers of the United Nations were true in 1945 and are no less valid in 1990.

Let's make it work.

Thank you, Mr President.
